

The Road Not Taken: Edward Lansdale and the American Tragedy in Vietnam - By Max Boot

The heavy fighting continued into the new month. Lansdale saw Thé for the last time three days later, on Monday, May 3. Blood dripping from a flesh wound on his hand, Thé arrived at 5 p.m. to tell Lansdale that his troops were pinned down at the Tan Thuan bridge by Binh Xuyen gunboats. His men were taking heavy casualties and could not cross the bridge, because they had no artillery with which to fight back.⁶⁹ As soon as he heard this, Lansdale sped over to the Norodom Palace. He found Diem in a conference with several officers. They were jubilant because the army had put the Binh Xuyen to flight. Lansdale was furious that they were celebrating while Trinh Minh Thé's men were getting slaughtered. He demanded they do something to help the diminutive guerrilla—an indication of how freely he was willing to involve himself in what other American officials would have viewed as internal Vietnamese affairs. Shamefaced, Diem told a colonel to get some artillery over to Thé.

The officers then left while Diem, as was his wont, delivered a two-hour exposition to Lansdale on Vietnamese politics. He included some derisory comments about Thé, who “he pointed out was only a peasant and presumably not as worthy as present company,” Lansdale recalled. Ed was “pretty sharp” in his retort. Their colloquy was interrupted at 8 p.m. by Ngo Dinh Nhu, who walked in to announce that Trinh Minh Thé had just been killed. Both Diem and Lansdale were shocked and grief-stricken. Diem asked Lansdale “to forgive what he had just said” and began crying. Lansdale held him in his arms as great sobs racked his body—the only time Lansdale ever saw him cry.⁷⁰

Thé had been shot in the back of the head. The culprit could have been French, Binh Xuyen, one

Nguồn:

Google book-Max Boot >> [The Road Not Taken: Edward Lansdale and the American Tragedy in Vietnam](#)